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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 004358

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/CM  
NSC FOR DENNIS WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2031  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#) [HK](#)  
SUBJECT: ALAN LEONG OFFICIALLY ENTERS CHIEF EXECUTIVE RACE

REF: HONG KONG 3872

Classified By: E/P Section Chief Laurent Charbonnet; Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Pro-democracy Civic Party legislator Alan Leong formally declared his candidacy for Hong Kong Chief Executive (CE) on November 4. Leong denied that he had received any pressure -- from Beijing or elsewhere -- not to run, and he told the press that a single-candidate election for CE would be a "bad thing" for Hong Kong. Two of Hong Kong's leading independent newspapers supported Leong's decision as a means to force current CE Donald Tsang to enunciate his vision for the city and bring greater legitimacy to the Government. The next step for Leong is to gather at least one hundred nominations from the 800-member CE Election Committee (EC) in late January or early February; if he surpasses that threshold, he will be able to contest the March 25, 2007 vote by the EC to choose the next CE. While opinions on whether Leong can get at least one hundred EC votes are mixed, at this point no one in Hong Kong believes he has any chance to win the March election. End Summary.

Hat in the Ring  
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¶2. (SBU) Civic Party legislator Alan Leong formally declared his candidacy for Hong Kong Chief Executive (CE) on November ¶4. His long-expected announcement followed approval of his candidacy at the party's annual general meeting. Leong claimed that no one, including central government officials in Beijing, had pressured him not to run. Leong also said he had received "a very positive message" from various people in Hong Kong about his decision to join the election. He also told the press that a single-candidate election for CE would be a "bad thing" for Hong Kong. On November 6, two of Hong Kong's leading independent newspapers, the English-language "South China Morning Post" (SCMP) and the Chinese "Ming Pao," supported Leong's decision to participate in the March 2007 CE election. The SCMP said it was important to have more than one candidate for CE, as this would increase pressure on current CE Donald Tsang to enunciate his vision for Hong Kong and engage in public debate. "Ming Pao" observed that genuine competition would boost public confidence and enhance public acceptance of the Government.

Prospects for Nomination? Fair  
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¶3. (SBU) Under Hong Kong's current partially democratic electoral system (septel), a candidate for CE must receive at least one hundred nominations from the 800-member Election Committee (EC) to contest the election, scheduled for March 25, 2007. If CE Tsang is the only candidate to surpass this threshold, as was the case in the most recent election in

2005, then he will run unopposed. Several months ago, when it appeared likely that popular former Chief Secretary Anson Chan would contest the election on behalf of the pan-democrats, many observers felt she easily would garner 120-150 nominations, forcing CE Tsang to engage in public debate over his policies and his vision for the future. Since Chan decided in late September that she would not run, however, the democrats have become somewhat less optimistic. (reftel)

¶4. (C) Shiu Sin-por, formerly Director of the "One Country, Two Systems Research Institute" and now a senior visiting fellow at Beijing's Tsinghua University, told us on November 6 that Leong easily would be able to collect at least 100 nominations. The votes of the 25 pan-democrats in the Legislative Assembly, together with most if not all of the social welfare subsector (40 EC members) and likely large majorities in the education (20), higher education (20), legal (20), and other professional subsectors, easily should push Leong over the threshold needed to contest the election. While those nominations, due to be cast in late-January or early February, are not submitted under a secret ballot system, Shiu felt that these electors would not be susceptible to pressure from the mainland. Shiu also noted his recent interview with cable television program host and NPC local deputy Allen Lee, who contrarily opined that Leong would have difficulty garnering even eighty nominations.

Prospects for Election? Nil  
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¶5. (C) Once the nominations are compiled, the same EC will vote in a secret ballot on March 25, 2007 to select the next CE. To date we have not heard anyone in Hong Kong, even

HONG KONG 00004358 002 OF 002

among the pan-democrats, suggest that anyone other than CE Tsang has even a long shot of winning the March vote. That

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said, anything less than a huge majority of the votes would be viewed as a criticism of Tsang, his policies, and/or the electoral system.  
Cunningham